

**School for New Learning  
DePaul University  
AI 165 Prairie Christmas: A 19<sup>th</sup> Century Christmas in Illinois  
South Campus  
December Term, 2009-2010  
Dates: Tuesday and Thursday, 6:30-9:30 pm  
Instructor: Jill A. Joachim  
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PO Box 541  
South Bend, IN 46624**

### **Course Description**

This class will feature a participative look back at Christmas in America in the 19th century (primarily) in the Chicago area. Five three-hour block class hours will lead students through a discussion of 19<sup>th</sup> century Christmas tradition. The class will be channeled through some lecture and discussion, though the focus will be on making Christmas decorations and gifts of the period. The class will decorate a communal tree, create a Christmas annual or Jacob's Ladder and make small gifts. The annual will be comprised of short Christmas writings from class participants. The Jacob's Ladder will be created with personal writings, decorations and other elements. The course will examine how traditions are changed over time.

The class is held at a busy time of year for most people so (by design) the focus is on in-class activity. With the exception of reading three short stories, no outside of class assignments will be made. Some students may voluntarily work on assignments outside of class time – though this will not be expected. **It is expected that students attend all classes in entirety.**

**SPECIAL NOTE: UNLIKE MANY SNL COURSES, THIS CLASS HAS ACTIVE CONTENT AND ACTIVITIES FROM THE VERY FIRST MEETING**

### **Faculty Biographical Sketch**

Jill A. Joachim is a lifelong learner and is dedicated to the principal that effective instructors lead students to personal discoveries. With a Bachelor degree in Forestry and a Masters in Science focused on business abetted by almost 20 years in operations and human resources management, the instructor has a solid basis of real life experience in business. Additionally, the instructor is a true polymath and actively pursues new learning and experience in a wide range of topics. These interests include crafting, sports and competitions of all types, math and science developments, the wacky activities of the British Royal Family, gardening, adoring her pets, family activities, music of all kinds, silly mystery novels and anything else that catches her fancy. Finally, the instructor is grateful she had the foresight to finish her education before entering a professional field. She is always appreciative that SNL students are full time workers, parents and care givers in addition to being part time students.

### **Competencies**

- A-5:** Can define and analyze a creative process
1. Can define the concept of creativity.

2. Can identify, analyze, and describe the components of a creative process in one or more fields of human endeavor.
3. Can explain how engaging in a creative process affects one's perception of the world.

Creativity is often associated with forms of human expression in the literary, fine, and applied arts. Because it involves the development of innovative ideas and fresh approaches to problems, however, the practice of creativity is no less integral a component of the social, physical, and technological sciences. In any field of human endeavor, the creative process requires an ability to question accepted and "acceptable" ways of perceiving and thinking, as well as a willingness to forge connections and refine knowledge through doubt, curiosity, and imagination. Through engagement, reflection, and analysis, this competence invites the student to understand how a creative process is born, how it functions, and how it changes our perception and experience of the world. Such insights may develop, for example, by analyzing the creative process in the writing of a poem, the production of a visual narrative, the planning of a city, the design of a web site, or the development of an innovative way of perceiving and explaining a natural phenomenon.

Students will demonstrate this competence by in class:

- \* Discussion of how 19<sup>th</sup> century Midwesterners used materials at hand to continue, redefine and create Christmas traditions.
- \* Discussion of the ways in which existing and new traditions change societies
- \* Students will reflect on their own traditions and beliefs to create written essays, poems, stories and songs about Christmas. These materials will be combined to create a class Christmas annual or used individually in creating Jacob's Ladder.
- \* Students will create homemade Christmas decorations and gifts

**A3X:** Can explore the development of Christmas customs in 19<sup>th</sup> century Illinois and relate them to religious and social movements and groups and the individual experience.

Students will demonstrate this competence by in class:

- \* Discussion of 19<sup>th</sup> century Christmas traditions in cities and on the prairie
- \* Discussion of the relative emergence of Christmas customs tied to group membership (or the lack thereof) in 19<sup>th</sup> Century Illinois
- \* Discussion of first person accounts of 19<sup>th</sup> century prairie Christmas experiences

**A-2-X:** Can use design elements related to a social tradition to create a representative object.

1. Designs an object.
2. Articulates the elements of the design.
3. Discusses concepts or themes of the object in terms of social traditions and values.

Students demonstrate this competence by designing an object and articulating the elements which comprise its design. It is also essential to explore the relationships among traditions, social values, and traditional imagery.

Students will demonstrate this competence in class by:

- \* Creating Christmas gifts and decorations based on simple concepts and traditions
- \* Creating short essays, stories, poems, drawings and songs about Christmas based on simple concepts and traditions.
- \* Discussing the variability of these creations and the activity's impact upon a student's own tradition and experience.

**H-1-H:** Can describe and analyze the challenges faced by communities in urban, suburban, or rural areas.

1. Articulates the characteristics of an urban, suburban, or rural geographic area.
2. Identifies one or more communities that embody the attributes of an urban, suburban, or rural geographic area.
3. Provides an in-depth description and analysis of one or more challenges for the selected area(s).

Students demonstrate competence by describing the elements of a geographic area that define it as being urban, suburban, or rural. Analysis may concentrate on either change over time within one location, or, compare and contrast of several locations and their challenges (such as adequacy of housing and transportation, development of an adequate tax base, migration or emigration of population, planning for land use). Students should consider experiences they have had in their own community as the basis for approaching this competence.

Students will demonstrate this competence in class by:

- \* Discussing the nature of 19<sup>th</sup> century rural, suburban and urban Midwest.
- \* Discussing the impact of the type of community in which 19<sup>th</sup> century Midwesterners lived on their experience and tradition of Christmas celebration
- \* Discussing the impact of nationality and religious belief on Christmas tradition and practice

### **Learning Experience**

The learning experience will be largely, experience-based. The class will create the kinds of Christmas decorations, gifts and activities that were common in the 19<sup>th</sup> century Midwest. The class will generate short Christmas stories, poems or songs (set to tunes in the public domain) to share in a traditional Christmas annual (produced by class participants to share as Christmas gifts) or use individually in a Jacob's Ladder. *Please note that class writings may be reproduced and shared as part of a class project.* Students will sing carols as a group.

There will be instructor-led lectures and discussions on such topics as

- \* Ancient origins, Roman and Celtic traditions
- \* Pilgrim other religious backlash against "pagan" Christmas tradition

- \* The variability of 19<sup>th</sup> century Christmas traditions across regions, nationalities, economic stature, etc.
- \* The tradition of carousing and noise making
- \* Development of Christmas music and caroling
- \* Tree trimming and decorating
- \* The origin and transformation of Kris Kringle, Saint Nick and Santa
- \* Southern and slave Christmas' impact on Midwestern Christmas tradition
- \* Commercialization of gift giving
- \* The origin of Christmas Cards, poinsettias, gift wrap and other 19<sup>th</sup> century emergent Christmas components
- \* Holiday food and beverages– likely 19<sup>th</sup> century menus and recipes
- \* Christmas story writing – common metaphors and myths
- \* Common gifts – cards, dolls, fruit, cookies, checkers

Grades for any competence will be based on attendance and participation as competence will be gained by experience and discussion in class and in writing produced while in class.

Students will be expected to read three short Christmas stories prior to class number three. The stories will be available on electronic reserve, so students will need to be able to use the internet. The required reading will be discussed in class and includes selections from:

Selections from “A Home in the Woods, Pioneer Life in Indiana”; as related by Howard Johnson; 1991; Indiana University Press; Bloomington, IN;

“Mr. Edwards Meets Santa Claus” from THE LITTLE HOUSE ON THE PRAIRIE; Laura Ingalls Wilder; 1935; Harpers Collins Publishers, NY, NY

Christmas at Orchard House by Louisa May Alcott, from; A CHRISTMAS TREASURY OF YULETIDE STORIES; edited by Charlton, James and Gilson, Barbara; 1976; LDAP; NY, NY

A supplies fee of \$25.00 per student will be charged by the University for communal materials such as a tree, Glue sticks, Ribbons, Doilies, Colored paper, White paper, Glitter, Ruler, String, Foil, Needle, Thread, Annual Cover, Card Stock, Buttons, Penny Candy, Corn husks, Fabric scraps, Buttons, Colored pencils, tree, etc.

### **Evidence the Students will Submit**

Students must attend and participate in class. They will need to discuss topics, do simple crafts, write **short, simple** essays, stories, poems, songs, and/or create drawings. The class group will need to develop and reproduce a Christmas annual booklet or individuals will complete a Jacob's Ladder in the final class.

All work done in and for this class must comply with the Academic Integrity Policy as defined in the DePaul Student Handbook (<http://www.depaul.edu/~handbook/code17.html>). By policy, the instructor cannot and

will not tolerate violations of the policy including, but not limited to cheating; plagiarism; fabrication; falsification or sabotage of research data; destruction or misuse of the university's academic resources; alteration or falsification of academic records; and academic misconduct. Conduct that is punishable under the Academic Integrity Policy could result in additional disciplinary actions by other university officials and possible civil or criminal prosecution.

Accommodation of special needs of any kind should be confidentially addressed to the instructor, are welcome and will be treated with respect and as much creativity as can be brought to bear.

Class grades will be dependent entirely on attendance and participation for any competence.





### **Criteria for Assessment**

Grades will be based upon attendance and participation in classes and class activities. Missing one class means failure.




### **Class Schedule – TENTATIVE AND SUBJECT TO CHANGE BASED ON A NUMBER OF VARIABLES.**

#### **Class One, December 1**




##### **Lecture and discussion:**


-  Ancient origins, Roman and Celtic traditions
-  Pilgrim other religious backlash against “pagan” Christmas tradition
-  The variability of 19th century Christmas traditions across regions, nationalities, economic stature, etc.
-  The tradition of carousing and noise making

##### **Creative activity:**

-  Put up the tree
-  Make Kissing Balls
-  Take Silhouette Portrait photos

**In class assignment:** Think about and record the Christmas traditions of your family. Answer/discuss in a dyad:





-  What are the five words that best describe your family Christmas?
-  How could you share these five words with others through essays or songs?
-  What is your favorite Christmas show and why?

 What other way could you share what excites you about this show with others?



 Write two paragraphs on the theme “Christmas is wonderful because...”

### **Class Two, December 3**







#### **Lecture and discussion:**

-  Tree trimming and decorating
-  The origin and transformation of Kris Kringle, Saint Nick and Santa
-  Commercialization of gift giving
-  Common gifts – cards, dolls, fruit, cookies, checkers

#### **Creative activity:**



-  Make a button buzzer
-  Make a cup and ball game

#### **In class assignment:** Form dyads. Discuss the following:



-  What was your childhood Santa like? What is your family Santa like today?
-  Do you celebrate St. Nick’s day on December 6th? What do you think about this tradition?
-  What was the best gift you ever got and why?
-  What was the best gift you ever gave and why?
-  Share your Christmas theme from last week with your partner and solicit a constructive critique. Revise your theme.
-  Write a short theme or story about Christmas greenery, Santa, St. Nick or Kris Kringle.


### **Class Three, December 8**

#### **Lecture and discussion:**


-  Development of Christmas music and caroling
-  Christmas story writing – common metaphors and myths

#### **Creative activity:**


-  Make silhouette portraits
-  Read Christmas stories aloud to the class

 Sing carols

**In class assignment:**

 Singly or in groups of up to three, create short carols that fit old tunes. Prepare to sing them in class

 Create Christmas Haiku

 In dyads, constructively critique and rewrite last week's composition.

**Class Four, December 10**

**Lecture and discussion:**

 Southern and slave Christmas' impact on Midwestern Christmas tradition

 The origin of Christmas Cards


 Holiday food and beverages– likely menus and recipes

**Creative activity:**

 Make a corn husk doll

 Read Christmas stories aloud to the class

**In class assignment:**

 Write a short paragraph or two describing your Christmas food traditions; relate how and why these enhance your tradition and culture

 Complete and submit essays, stories, songs and drawings for the annual or Jacob's ladder.

 In dyads, constructively critique and rewrite last week's composition.

 Discuss the layout and content of the annual, if needed


**Class Five, December 15**


**Lecture and discussion:**

 Leftovers and catch up

**Creative activity:**

 As a group – complete and reproduce the annual, if needed

 Individually, complete and share the content of a Jacob's Ladder Gift Book.

 Celebrate class accomplishments

 Clean up the room

**Other:** Student work due electronically to instructor

